

July 8, 2019

Dear Mayor Fred Eisenberger,

We write to you as scholars who live and work across our shared urban region - the Greater Golden Horseshoe in the territory of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum. We write to register profound concern about the recent treatment of members of Hamilton's queer, trans and Two Spirit community by your office and by the Hamilton Police Services. We are disappointed with your conduct, outraged by the unjust treatment of queer, trans and Two Spirit people, and insistent that Hamilton can and must do better.

Organized hate groups descended upon Hamilton's 2019 Pride celebrations in an attempt to intimidate and harass participants. In response, members of Hamilton's queer, trans and Two Spirit community mobilized creative tactics to physically shield pride participants and protect them from violence and hatred. Instead of supporting members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, your office and the Hamilton police aggressively targeted and criminalized them. This is a troubling reminder of the necessity of Pride, a global movement that emerged out of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion in which queer and trans New Yorkers, many of colour, resisted systemic police violence.

Recent events in Hamilton are also just one episode in a much larger story of marginalization of local queer, trans and Two Spirit people. As an [important June 2019 report](#) makes clear, members of Hamilton's 2SLGBTQ+ community are experiencing deepening forms of socio-economic marginalization, and harassment in public spaces and services. The report documents that 51% of respondents have experienced discrimination or harassment in outdoor public spaces and 53% of respondents have experienced harassment, violence or hate crimes at least once in Hamilton. For transgender respondents, this number was 61%. The report also highlights the lack of trust in the police; only 10% of respondents who had experienced harassment, violence or hate crimes reported the incident. 26% faced barriers or discrimination in housing, and unemployment rates are nearly twice the level of the broader population. This is unacceptable.

These are serious times and the stakes are high. The emboldening of right wing extremism can have life or death consequences for 2SLGBTQ+ people. We implore you to show responsible leadership and to choose the right path by:

1. Releasing all queer, trans and Two Spirit people incarcerated in relation to Pride events and dropping all charges against Pride defenders;
2. Consulting with Hamilton's established 2SLGBTQ+ advisory committee on ways forward;
3. Initiating discussions with your 2SLGBTQ+ advisory committee about the creation of community space.

Sincerely,

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William Graham, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Toronto
Jennifer Nedelsky, Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University

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Cc: Chief Eric Girt, Hamilton Police Services; Hamilton Police Services Board